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No. 1373

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AUS. N.Z. 40c

# Commando

WAR STORIES IN PICTURES



## The CHAMPIONS



Stars of Speedway—Neil Collins

# THE CHAMPIONS

MAJOR CHARLES  
CAMPION.



PRIVATE "GABBY"  
GILLESPIE.



PRIVATE  
HAMISH MACKAY.



PRIVATE  
"WEEPY" WILLOW.

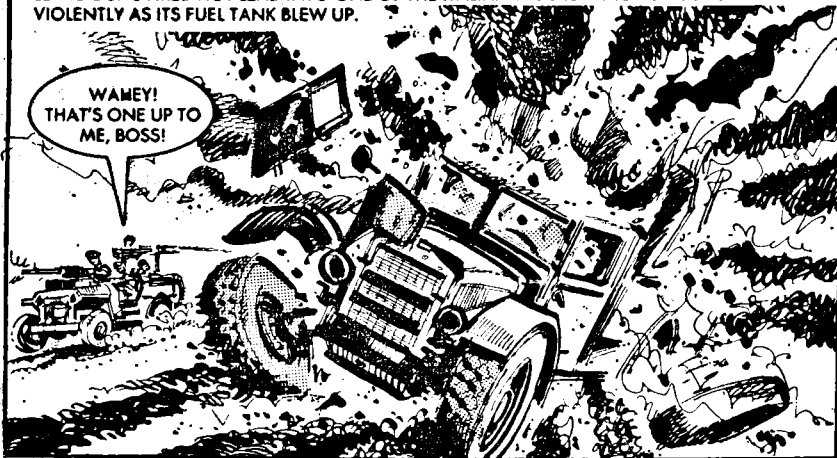


**M**AJOR CHARLES CAMPION  
COMMANDED A DESERT  
RAIDING FORCE, A PRIVATE  
ARMY WITH SOME VERY  
BIZARRE CHARACTERS. BUT  
ONE THING ABOUT THEM ...  
ESPECIALLY THE MEN WHO  
CREWED THE MAJOR'S OWN  
JEEP ... THEY WERE ALL  
PROUD TO BE "CAMPION'S  
CHAMPIONS" AND WOULD  
OBEY HIS EVERY ORDER!

ACROSS THE DESERT WASTES THEY ROAMED, CREATING HAVOC AMONG GERMAN AND ITALIAN CONVOYS WITH THEIR QUICK AND INCISIVE ATTACKS.



AND PRIVATE "GABBY" GILLESPIE, A ROUGH, TOUGH AUSTRALIAN WAS RIGHT. HIS TWIN LEWIS GUNS FIRED HOT LEAD INTO ONE OF THE ITALIAN TRUCKS WHICH EXPLODED VIOLENTLY AS ITS FUEL TANK BLEW UP.



THE SCARED AND CONFUSED TROOPS JUMPED OUT TO OFFER RESISTANCE, BUT WERE IMMEDIATELY CUT DOWN BY A HAIL OF BULLETS FROM THE HEAVILY-ARMED JEEP.



AS SWIFTLY AS IT HAD BEGUN, THE ATTACK BROKE OFF, LEAVING A SCENE OF DEVASTATION. THE SURVIVING ITALIANS GAVE OUT A FUTILE VOLLEY OF RETURN FIRE.



CAMPION'S OTHER GUNNER, PRIVATE HAMISH MACKAY, A TALL AND POWERFULLY BUILT HIGHLANDER, DOURLY AGREED WITH HIM.

A SHORT WHILE LATER CAMPION AND HIS TEAM STOPPED FOR A WELL-EARNED REST AND A BREW-UP. AS USUAL, HE GOOD-NATUREDLY MENTIONED ANY FAULTS HE HAD NOTICED. THIS TIME HE COMMENTED ON THE SKILL OF HIS DRIVER, PRIVATE "WEEPY" WILLOW, A TALL, LONELY LONDONER.

BIT SLOW  
ON THOSE TURNS,  
WILLOW. YOU'RE NOT DRIVING  
A LONDON BUS,  
YOU KNOW.

BLIMEY,  
HE'S NEVER  
PLEASED.

BUT DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE PUSHED HIS MEN HARD, THE MAJOR WAS GREATLY LIKED AND RESPECTED.

AND NOTHING SUITED WEEPY BETTER  
THAN A GOOD MOAN. IT GAVE THE OTHERS  
A CHANCE FOR A LAUGH TOO—

I CAN'T  
DO ANYTHING RIGHT  
FOR HIM...

HERE YOU  
ARE, MATE, 'AVE A  
GOOD CRY.

GABBY SMILED AND THOUGHT BACK  
TO WHEN HE HAD FIRST MET MAJOR  
CAMPION.

'E MIGHT  
BE A NIT-PICKER,  
BUT 'E'S A GOOD  
BLOKE...

THE OTHERS HAD HEARD IT ALL BEFORE, BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP GABBY RECOUNTING HOW HE'D FIRST COME INTO CONTACT WITH CAMPION... ON A NIGHT IN CAIRO WHEN HE'D FOUND HIMSELF IN BOTHER AS USUAL, THIS TIME WITH A BUNCH OF BRITISH SOLDIERS HE HAD "OFFENDED".



COME ON THEN, SPORTS. ACTION SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS.

YOU'RE GONNA GET IT ... YOU'VE ASKED FOR TROUBLE THIS TIME.

THE BRITISH SOLDIERS HAD RECKONED WITHOUT THE AUSSIE'S ROUGH BRAWLING WAYS AND VERY SOON WERE PAYING FOR THEIR IGNORANCE. BUT THEN TWO MILITARY POLICEMEN APPEARED, AND THEY HAD OBVIOUSLY MET GABBY BEFORE.



NOT YOU AGAIN! PUT HIM DOWN AND COME ALONG QUIETLY.

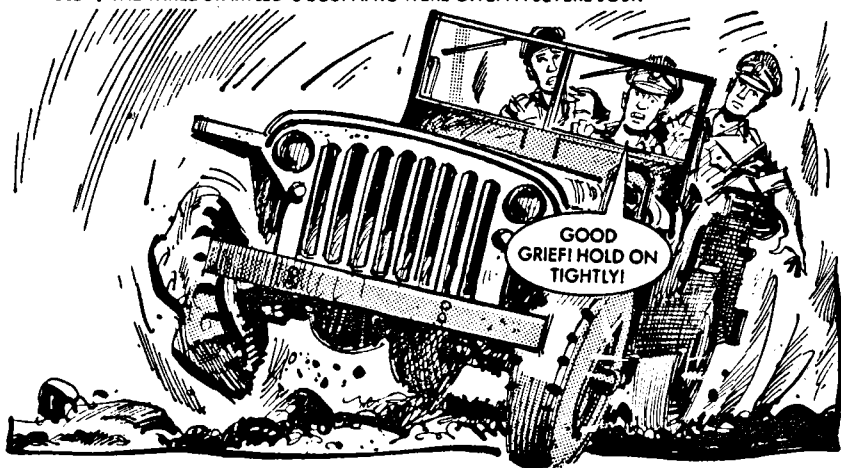
YOU KNOW ME BETTER THAN THAT, COBBER. YOU'LL 'AVE TER TAKE ME BY FORCE.

A FIERCE STRUGGLE ENSUED, BUT ONE M.P. MANAGED TO LAND A BLOW ON GABBY'S HEAD, KNOCKING HIM OUT...

... AND WHEN HE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS HE WAS BEING DRIVEN TO THE NEAREST GUARDHOUSE UNDER CLOSE WATCH.

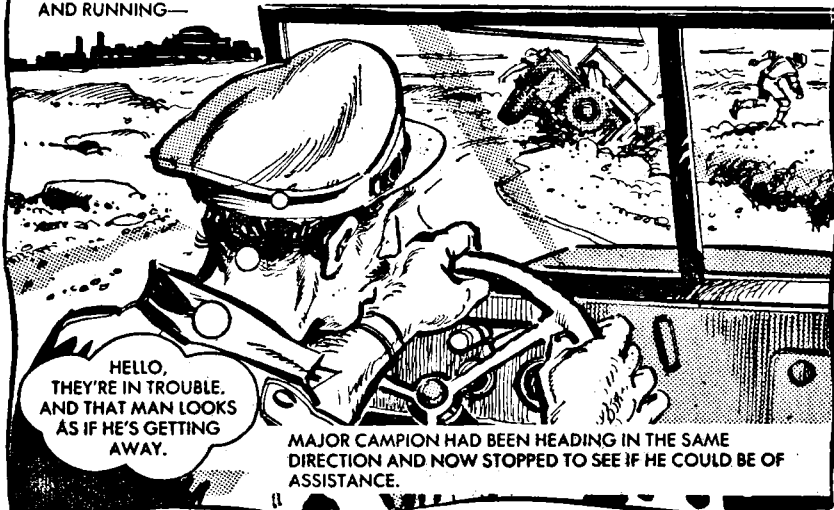


SUDDENLY, WITHOUT WARNING, THE JEEP LURCHED TO ONE SIDE AS A FRONT TYRE BLEW. THE THREE STARTLED OCCUPANTS WERE GIVEN A SEVERE JOLT.





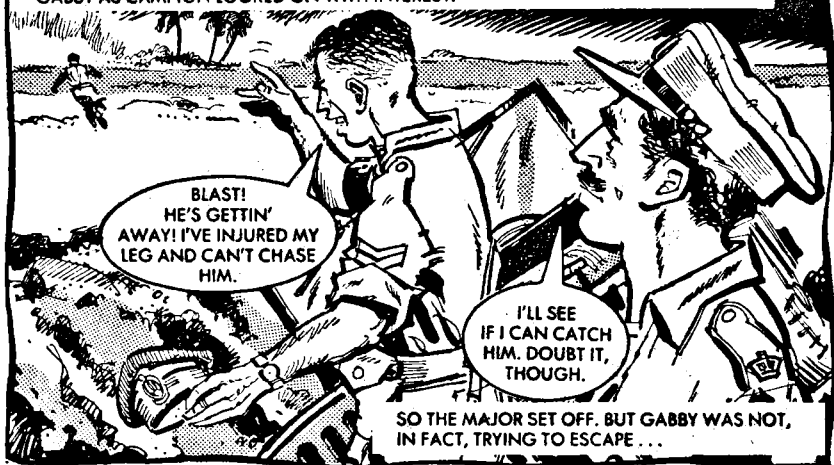
THE DRIVER WRESTLED FURIOUSLY WITH THE WHEEL, BUT FINALLY LOST CONTROL AND THE JEEP VEERED INTO A DITCH BY THE SIDE OF THE ROUGH TRACK. GABBY WAS QUICKLY OUT AND RUNNING—



HELLO,  
THEY'RE IN TROUBLE.  
AND THAT MAN LOOKS  
AS IF HE'S GETTING  
AWAY.

MAJOR CAMPION HAD BEEN HEADING IN THE SAME  
DIRECTION AND NOW STOPPED TO SEE IF HE COULD BE OF  
ASSISTANCE.

ONE M.P. HAD REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS, POINTING ANGRILY AFTER THE FLEEING GABBY AS CAMPION LOOKED ON WITH INTEREST.



BLAST!  
HE'S GETTIN'  
AWAY! I'VE INJURED MY  
LEG AND CAN'T CHASE  
HIM.

I'LL SEE  
IF I CAN CATCH  
HIM. DOUBT IT,  
THOUGH.

SO THE MAJOR SET OFF. BUT GABBY WAS NOT,  
IN FACT, TRYING TO ESCAPE . . .

... HE HAD NOTICED A PLUME OF SMOKE AS A FIRE BROKE OUT IN BUILDINGS CLOSE TO THE ROAD AND WHEN HE RAN TO INVESTIGATE, THE SOUND OF FRIGHTENED HORSES HAD CARRIED TO HIS EARS, MAKING HIM RUN ALL THE HARDER.

THANK 'EAVENS—  
I'M JUST IN TIME  
TO SAVE THE  
POOR BEASTS.

DON'T BE  
A FOOL, MAN—  
THERE'S NOTHING YOU  
CAN DO!

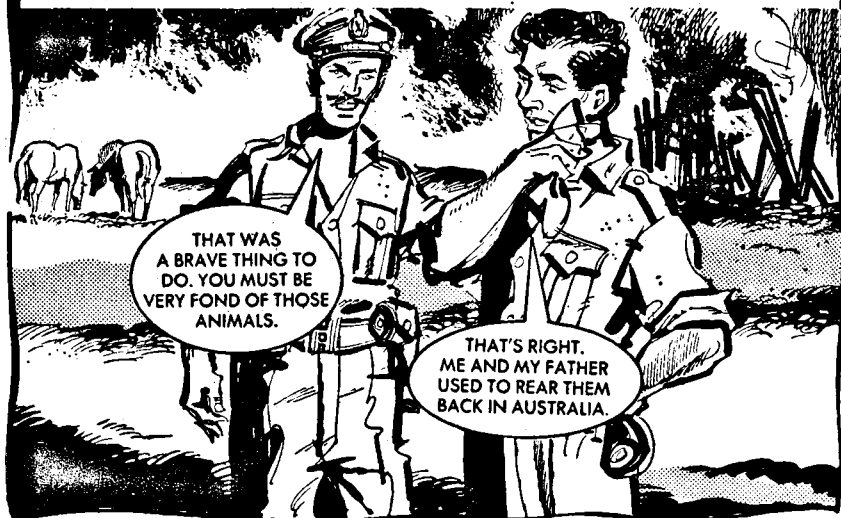
BUT CAMPION, FOLLOWING HARD ON THE AUSSIE'S HEELS, HAD UNDERESTIMATED HIS CONCERN FOR THE HORSES.

SECONDS LATER GABBY BURST OUT FROM THE BLINDING, CHOKING SMOKE AND FLAMES, EXPERTLY GUIDING THE FIRST OF THE TERRIFIED ANIMALS. CAMPION STOOD BY, STARTLED BY THIS ACT OF RECKLESSNESS.

YOU MUST  
BE EITHER CRAZY  
ABOUT HORSES OR JUST  
PLAIN MAD!

WITHOUT A WORD GABBY DASHED BACK INTO THE BLAZING BARN TO RESCUE THE OTHER HORSE.

WITH BOTH HORSES SAFE, GABBY TOOK A BREATHER. THE MAJOR WALKED OVER TO SPEAK TO HIM, HIS VOICE FULL OF ADMIRATION FOR THE YOUNG AUSSIE.



THAT WAS  
A BRAVE THING TO  
DO. YOU MUST BE  
VERY FOND OF THOSE  
ANIMALS.

THAT'S RIGHT.  
ME AND MY FATHER  
USED TO REAR THEM  
BACK IN AUSTRALIA.

DECIDING THAT GABBY DESERVED BETTER THAN A PRISON CELL, CAMPION USED HIS INFLUENCE TO GET HIM A FULL PARDON SO THAT THE AUSSIE COULD JOIN HIS OWN UNIT. AND THE NEXT DAY—



COME ON,  
GILLESPIE. YOU CAN  
MEET THE REST OF  
THE LADS.

DON'T  
KNOW WHY HE  
GOT ME OUT OF  
TROUBLE, BUT HE'S  
A GOOD BLOKE...

THERE GABBY FINISHED HIS STORY, AND THEN SMILED AT HIS AUDIENCE.



THE BIG, DOUR SCOTSMAN FROWNED, THEN BEGAN HIS TALE WITH A GRIM LOOK ON HIS FACE.



HAMISH TOLD HOW HE HAD ALWAYS BEEN A BIT OF A TROUBLE-MAKER. THIS PARTICULAR NIGHT AS HE TRIED TO PICK A FIGHT WITH SOME TROOPS FROM ANOTHER UNIT, MAJOR CAMPION HAD HAPPENED TO BE PRESENT—



BUT MOMENTS LATER THE SCOTSMAN'S TEMPER FLARED AND HE LASHED OUT AT ONE UNFORTUNATE SOLDIER. CAMPION STOOD BY, WATCHING IN DISGUST.



QUITE COOLLY THE MAJOR WALKED OVER AND TAPPED HAMISH ON THE SHOULDER, MUCH TO THE BIG MAN'S INDIGNANCE.



MAJOR CAMPION THEN PROMPTLY TURNED ON HIS HEEL AND WALKED TO THE DOOR, LOOKING BACK AT HAMISH WHO STOOD, ARMS AKIMBO, BOTH ANGRY AND AMAZED.



AND HAMISH FOLLOWED CAMPION OUTSIDE, DECIDING HE WOULDN'T BE TOO HARD ON HIM.

BUT THE BIG SCOTSMAN WAS IN FOR A FEW RATHER UNPLEASANT SURPRISES, FOR WHEN HE CHARGED AT CAMPION IN THE ALLEYWAY HE FOUND HIMSELF THROWN ROUGHLY ON TO A PILE OF RUBBISH, MUCH TO THE AMAZEMENT OF A COUPLE OF ONLOOKERS.



TWO MINUTES LATER, HAMISH KNEW HE WAS A BEATEN MAN AS HE LAY SPRAWLED ON THE GROUND, HALF-DAZED. CAMPION LOOKED DOWN AND SPOKE—



AND SO, HAMISH EXPLAINED, THAT WAS HOW HE CAME TO SERVE UNDER CAMPION. BUT AS HE AND GABBY TALKED ABOUT OLD TIMES, WEEPY SAT ALONE, THINKING.



THEN WEEPY HAD BEEN IN THE FRONT-LINE AGAINST ROMMEL'S STRONG GERMAN FORCE. THE POOR PRIVATE WAS UTTERLY TERRIFIED AND AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY CROUCHED BEHIND ANY COVER AVAILABLE, COWERING IN FEAR.



WEEPY'S TOTAL LACK OF NERVE EARNED HIM ANGRY SCORN FROM HIS N.C.O. AND FELLOW MEN. ONLY THE C.O., CAPTAIN HUNT, FELT ANY TWINGE OF SYMPATHY.





AND THE SERGEANT'S TONGUE-LASHING WAS VERY MUCH ON WEEPY'S MIND AS THEY MOVED BACK TO THE REAR LINES.



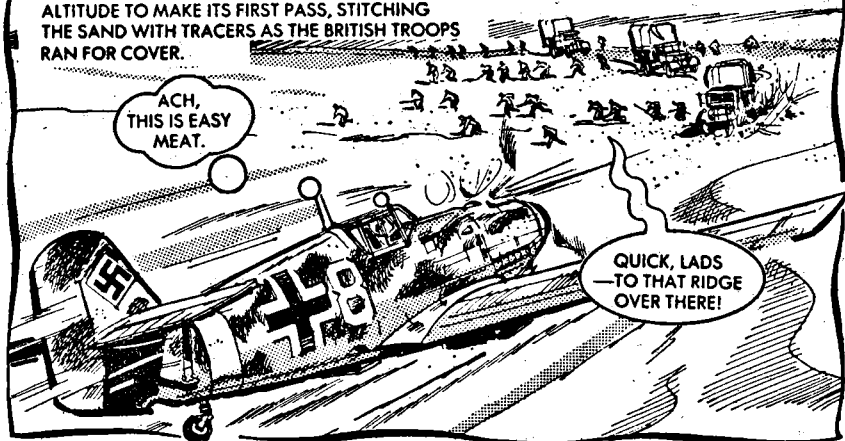
THE SARGE IS RIGHT, I'M NO USE, I'M JUST LETTING THE OTHERS DOWN...

BUT HIGH ABOVE IN THE SKIES AT THAT MOMENT, A PROWLING GERMAN Me 109 FIGHTER PILOT SPOTTED THE BRITISH TRUCKS BELOW.



GUT! I THOUGHT I WAS IN FOR ANOTHER BORING PATROL UNTIL NOW...

THE FIGHTER SCREAMED DOWN TO ZERO ALTITUDE TO MAKE ITS FIRST PASS, STITCHING THE SAND WITH TRACERS AS THE BRITISH TROOPS RAN FOR COVER.



ACH, THIS IS EASY MEAT.

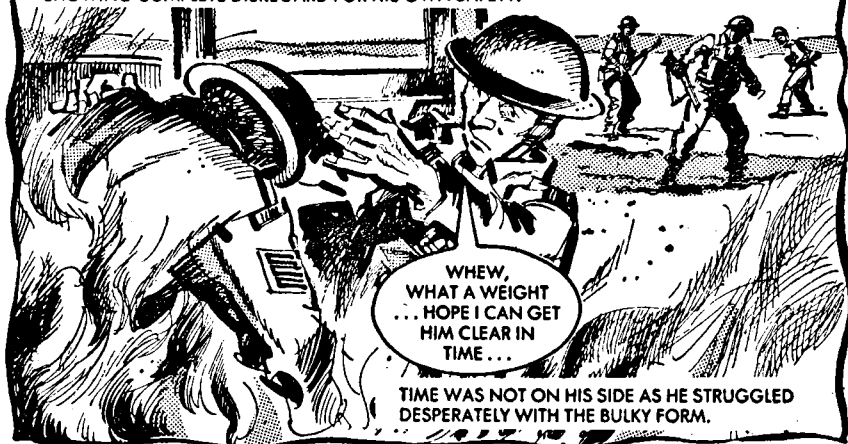
QUICK, LADS — TO THAT RIDGE OVER THERE!

THE EXPERIENCED GERMAN PILOT HAD SCORED A HIT ON THE LEADING TRUCK AND IT RAPIDLY CAUGHT FIRE, BUT AS WEEPY RAN TO COVER HE TURNED ROUND TO SEE THE SERGEANT, UNCONSCIOUS IN THE CAB WITH FLAMES LICKING AROUND HIM.



WEEPY DID NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO AND STOOD ROOTED TO THE SPOT FOR A FEW PRECIOUS SECONDS...

... BEFORE DASHING OVER TO TRY AND PULL THE SERGEANT FROM THE BLAZE, SHOWING COMPLETE DISREGARD FOR HIS OWN SAFETY.



TIME WAS NOT ON HIS SIDE AS HE STRUGGLED DESPERATELY WITH THE BULKY FORM.

BUT FINALLY WEEPY SUCCEEDED IN DRAGGING THE UNCONSCIOUS MAN FROM THE TEETH OF THE BLAZE, AND HE STAGGERED CLEAR, STRAINING UNDER THE WEIGHT AS OTHERS RUSHED TO HIS AID.



THEY MADE IT—ONLY JUST. THE CAPTAIN LOOKED AT WEEPY WITH ADMIRATION AS HE SAT, HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS, UNABLE TO BELIEVE WHAT HE HAD JUST DONE.



TWO WEEKS LATER, AT A PARTY GIVEN IN HONOUR OF A POPULAR OFFICER WHO WAS RETIRING, CAPTAIN HUNT MET MAJOR CAMPION AND RETOLD THE INCIDENT INVOLVING WEEPY. CAMPION WAS A VERY INTERESTED LISTENER—



AN INSTINCTIVE FEELING HAD TOLD CAMPION THAT THIS WAS THE MAN FOR HIM, AND SOON ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE FOR WEEPY TO JOIN HIS UNIT.



BUT THE PRIVATE WAS FRANKLY PUZZLED AS TO WHY HE HAD BEEN CHOSEN FOR THIS SPECIALIST FIGHTING GROUP.

AND SO, ONE WEEK LATER, CAMPION'S HAND-PICKED TEAM WENT INTO ACTION TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME. IT WAS A RATHER TENSE AND NERVOUS TIME FOR ALL, BUT NONE MORE SO THAN WEEPY WHEN THEY ENCOUNTERED OPPOSITION.



WHEN THE MAJOR'S JEEP AND THE OTHERS IN HIS FORCE SPREAD OUT TO ATTACK THE UNSUSPECTING ENEMY, WEEPY TOTALLY LOST HIS NERVE, BUT CAMPION POINTED HIS GUN THREATENINGLY AT HIM AND SPOKE HARSHLY.

I'M GETTING  
OUT... I CAN'T  
FACE IT!

MAKE ONE  
MOVE AND YOU'LL  
GET A ROW OF BULLETS  
THROUGH YOU—  
UNDERSTAND?

WEEPY NODDED—HE UNDERSTOOD ALL RIGHT. HE TOOK UP POSITION AND PREPARED HIMSELF FOR THE COMING FIGHT.

THE FIERCE BATTLE WITH THE ARMoured CARS LASTED SEVERAL MINUTES BEFORE BOTH WERE DESTROYED. AFTERWARDS CAMPION HALTED THE JEEP AND TOOK WEEPY ASIDE TO GIVE HIM A SEVERE REPRIMAND. GABBY AND HAMISH STOOD BY THE JEEP WAITING—

OCH, THE  
WEE MAN LOOKS  
LIKE HE'S GETTING  
AN AWFUL TELLING  
OFF.

I HOPE  
IT DOES HIM SOME  
GOOD...

HOWEVER, IT SEEMED THAT THE MAJOR'S LECTURE HAD ITS DESIRED EFFECT...

... FOR DURING THE NEXT WEEKS WEEPY PROVED HIMSELF AN EXCELLENT TEAM-MAN, FITTING IN PERFECTLY WITH THE OTHERS, AND ALSO EARNING HIS NICK-NAME FOR BEING SUCH A PESSIMIST.



ONCE THE RENDEZVOUS WAS MADE CAMPION AND HIS SECOND-IN-COMMAND, LIEUTENANT SNEEL, DISCUSSED THE ORDERS THEY HAD JUST RECEIVED ON THE WIRELESS SET FROM H.Q.



THE MAJOR QUICKLY MADE A DECISION, AND LEAPING INTO THE JEEP, HE EXPLAINED THAT HE WOULD RECCCE THE AREA ALONE, SO AS NOT TO RISK LIVES UNNECESSARILY. HE ISSUED FINAL INSTRUCTIONS TO LIEUTENANT SNELL AS HIS CREW LOOKED ON, DISMAYED AT NOT ACCOMPANYING HIM.

IF I'M  
NOT BACK WITHIN  
TWELVE HOURS, GO BACK TO  
BASE WIHOUT ME AND  
REPORT.

RIGHTO,  
SIR, TWELVE HOURS.  
GOOD LUCK.

AND CAMPION SET OFF, LEAVING THE  
MEN TO WAIT ANXIOUSLY.

SLOWLY THE TIME PASSED AND THE MEN  
BECAME VERY WORRIED WHEN THE DEADLINE  
APPROACHED AND THERE WAS STILL NO  
SIGN OF MAJOR CAMPION.

SOMETHING'S  
WRONG, HE SHOULD  
HAVE BEEN BACK  
BY NOW.

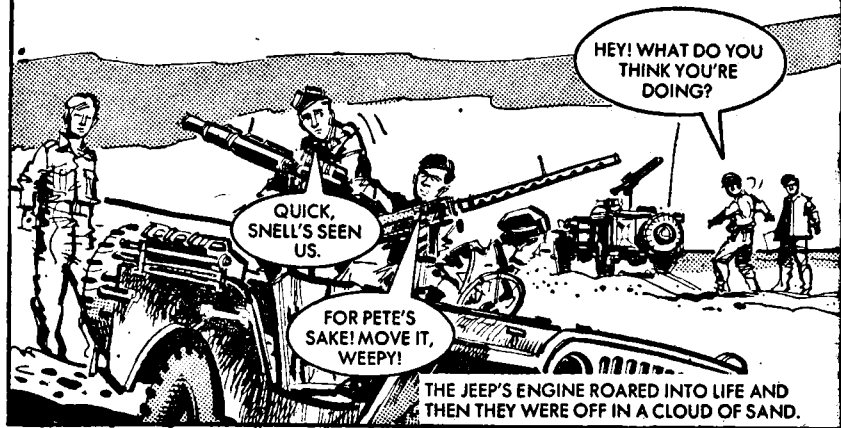
LIEUTENANT SNELL HELD OFF AS LONG  
AS HE POSSIBLY COULD BEFORE GIVING  
THE ORDER TO PREPARE TO MOVE OUT.

TIME'S UP,  
LADS. I'M AFRAID  
WE HAVE NO CHOICE  
BUT TO LEAVE.

BUT THE MAJOR'S CREWMEN WOULD NEVER THINK OF LEAVING WITHOUT HIM, AND WHEN THEY WERE ALONE HAMISH SPOKE FOR ALL OF THEM—



QUICKLY GABBY JUMPED INTO THE DRIVER'S SEAT OF THE NEAREST JEEP WHILE WEEPY AND HAMISH CLAMBERED INTO THE BACK. BUT THEY HAD BEEN SPOTTED—





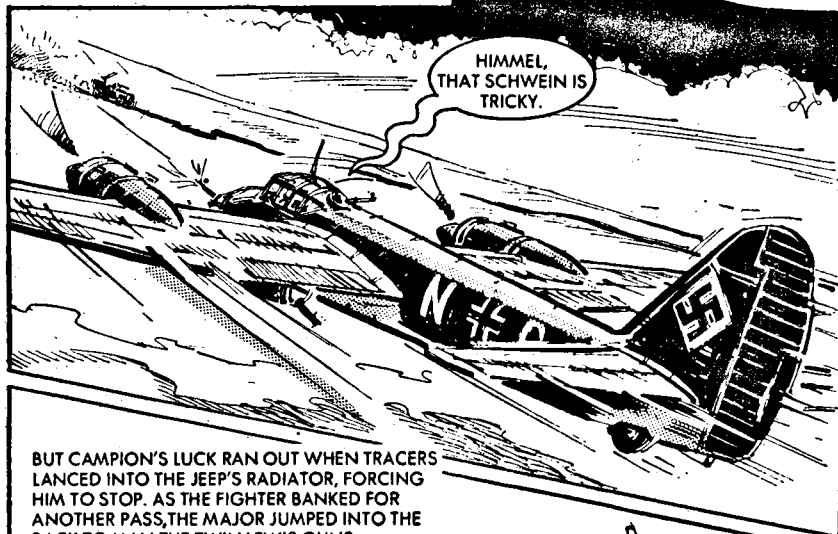
LIEUTENANT SNELL MERELY SIGHED AS HE WATCHED THEM SET OFF IN SEARCH OF MAJOR CAMPION. NOW HE AND THE FIVE OTHER MEN WOULD HAVE TO RETURN TO BASE IN THE ONE REMAINING JEEP.



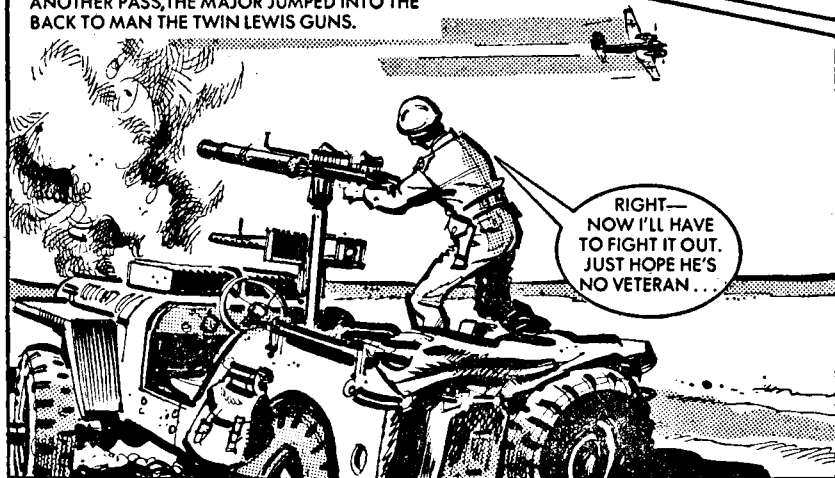
AT THAT MOMENT, ALMOST FIFTY MILES AWAY, THE MAJOR HAD STILL NOT FOUND ANY SIGN OF GERMAN ACTIVITY AND DECIDED TO CARRY ON. BUT NOW HE WAS ABOUT TO ENCOUNTER HIS FIRST SPOT OF TROUBLE, IN THE SHAPE OF AN APPROACHING JUNKERS 88.



DESPERATELY HE SENT THE JEEP INTO A SERIES OF TIGHT, SKIDDING TURNS AND SWERVES AS THE JU 88 PILOT TRIED TO FASTEN ONTO HIM.



BUT CAMPION'S LUCK RAN OUT WHEN TRACERS LANCED INTO THE JEEP'S RADIATOR, FORCING HIM TO STOP. AS THE FIGHTER BANKED FOR ANOTHER PASS, THE MAJOR JUMPED INTO THE BACK TO MAN THE TWIN LEWIS GUNS.



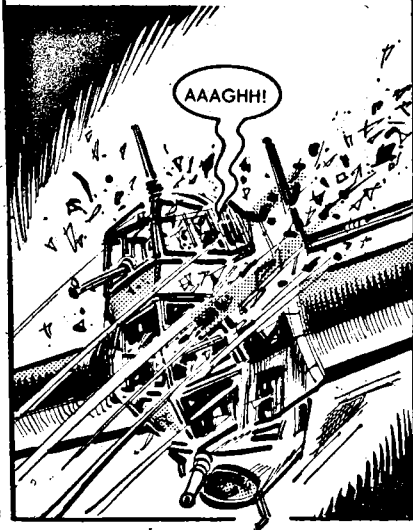
AS SOON AS THE GERMAN PLANE WAS WITHIN RANGE, THE MAJOR UNLEASHED A FURIOUS HAIL OF FIRE DIRECTLY IN ITS PATH.

TAKE THAT,  
YOU VULTURE!



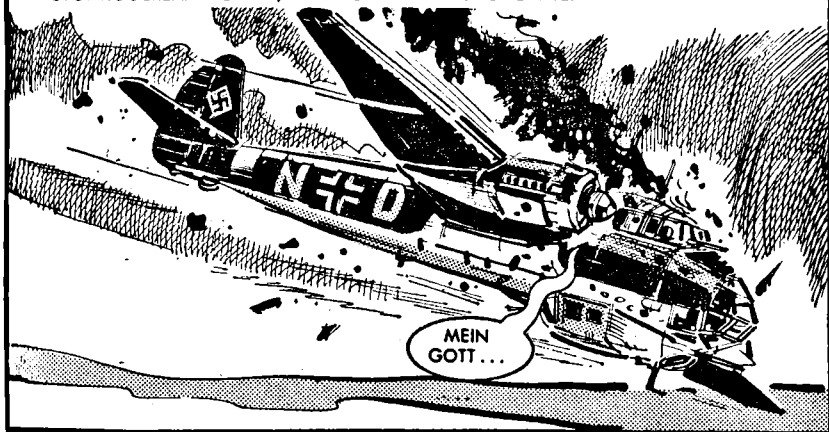
CAMPION'S AIM WAS SPOT ON. THE COCKPIT WAS SHATTERED INTO A THOUSAND FRAGMENTS AND THE PILOT DIED.

AAAGHH!



WITH ONE ENGINE ON FIRE AND STREAMING BLACK, OILY SMOKE, AND NO ONE TO STOP ITS SCREAMING DIVE, THE AIRCRAFT HAD BUT ONE FATE.

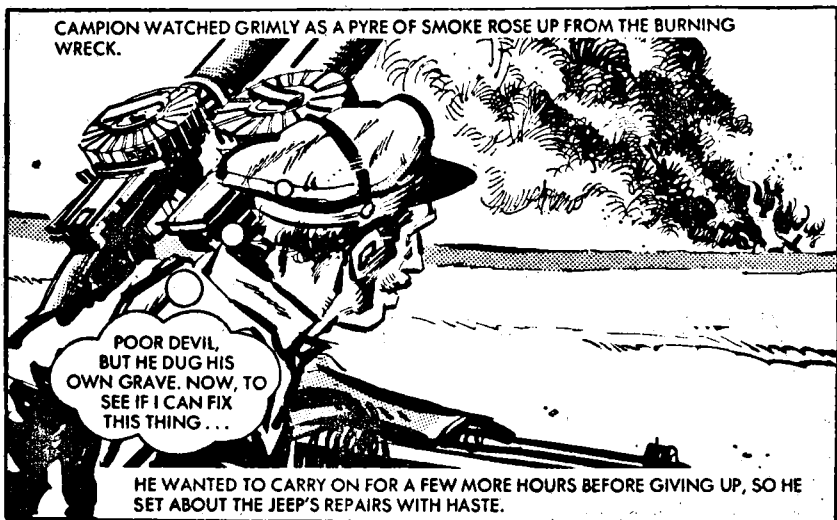
MEIN  
GOTT...



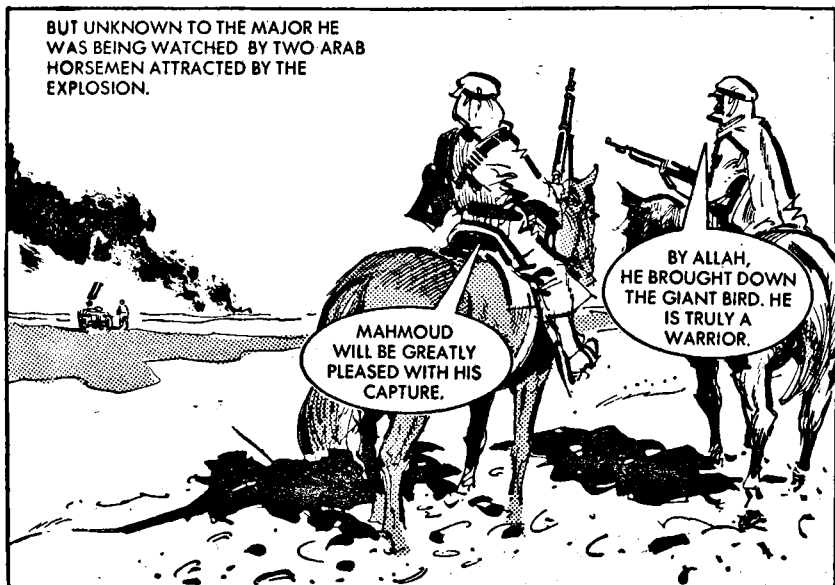
IT CRASHED INTO THE DESERT FLOOR, THE NOISE OF THE EXPLOSION CUTTING THROUGH THE STILL DESERT SILENCE.



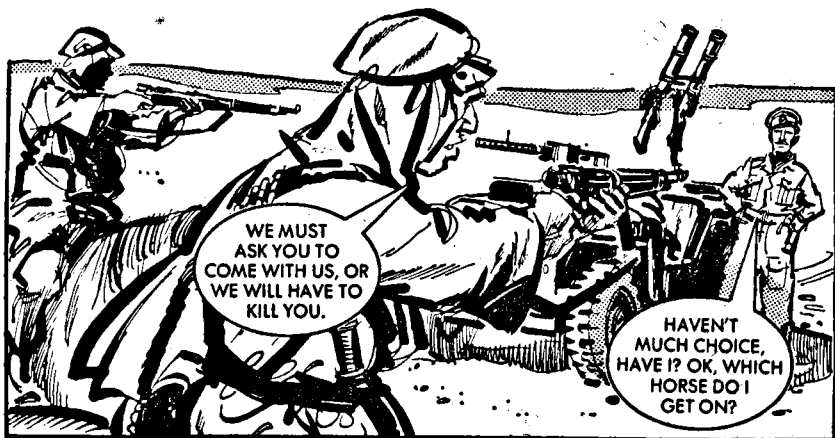
CAMPION WATCHED GRIMLY AS A PYRE OF SMOKE ROSE UP FROM THE BURNING WRECK.



HE WANTED TO CARRY ON FOR A FEW MORE HOURS BEFORE GIVING UP, SO HE SET ABOUT THE JEEP'S REPAIRS WITH HASTE.



THE TWO ARABS APPROACHED RATHER CAUTIOUSLY, GUNS AT THE READY— THEY WERE POLITE BUT INSISTED THAT CAMPION ACCOMPANY THEM TO MEET THEIR LEADER.



THE TWO RIDERS, WITH THEIR PRISONER, BEGAN THE JOURNEY BACK TO THEIR CAMP. CAMPION DID NOT CONSIDER HIMSELF IN ANY REAL DANGER AND ASKED ABOUT THE MAN HE WAS TO MEET.

IS THIS  
MAHMOUD A FRIENDLY  
SORT OF CHAP?

OUR  
LEADER IS  
A VERY FAIR AND  
HONEST MAN.

ONE THING CAMPION DIDN'T KNOW WAS THAT MAHMOUD'S EVIL BROTHER, RASHID, WAS AT THAT MOMENT ENGAGED IN A FIERY ARGUMENT. THE DESERT LEADER LISTENED CALMLY TO HIS BROTHER'S RANTINGS, ENJOYING A SMOKE FROM HIS HOOKAH.

I TELL  
YOU, WE MUST  
DECLARE WAR ON  
THE SHEFTAN.

THE SPILLING  
OF BLOOD IS NOT  
THE ONLY WAY TO  
SETTLE THIS. WE WILL  
NEGOTIATE WITH THEIR  
LEADER.

THE SHEFTAN WERE A NEIGHBOURING TRIBE, AND TROUBLE HAD ARISEN BETWEEN THEM AND MAHMOUD'S PEOPLE. BUT THE PEACE-LOVING LEADER DID NOT WANT WAR, UNLIKE HIS YOUNGER BROTHER WHO LONGED FOR POWER.

RASHID STORMED OUT OF HIS BROTHER'S TENT, GOING IN SEARCH OF A MAN WHO COULD HELP HIM—KARL KRUGER, A GERMAN ARMY OFFICER.



KARL HAD BEEN FOUND BY MAHMOUD'S MEN A WEEK EARLIER WHEN HE WAS WANDERING ALONE, HOPELESSLY LOST. BUT, IN FACT, UNKNOWN TO THE ARABS, HE WAS A GERMAN AGENT, PLANTED IN THE DESERT FOR THE PURPOSE OF CREATING UNREST AMONG THE TRIBES AND CONVERTING THEM TO THE CAUSE OF THE THIRD REICH.

SO FAR KRUGER HAD DONE WELL—HE HAD BEFRIENDED RASHID WITH THE INTENT OF HELPING HIM OVERTHROW HIS BROTHER. IT NOW LOOKED AS THOUGH HE MIGHT SUCCEED.



RASHID HAD FAITH IN KRUGER'S WORDS AND WAS SOON HIS ARROGANT SELF AGAIN.



RASHID SAT ALONE UNDER THE NIGHT SKY, THINKING BACK TO THE TIMES BEFORE WHEN MEN LIKE HIM HAD LED THE TRIBE TO BATTLE, CONQUERING ALL BEFORE THEM.



DURING THOSE YEARS THE TRIBES HAD LIVED BY THE SWORD. ANY DISAGREEMENT AND THE DESERT SANDS RAN RED WITH THE BLOOD OF MANY BRAVE ARAB WARRIORS.

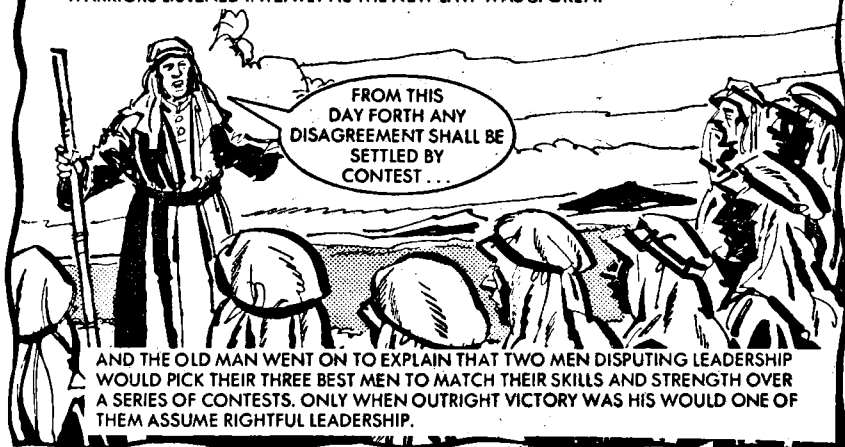




BUT THE SLAUGHTER HAD TO END BEFORE THE WARRING TRIBES WIPED ONE ANOTHER OUT. THE WISEST MEN FROM EACH OF THE TRIBES GATHERED TOGETHER TO TRY AND FIND A SOLUTION.



FINALLY A DECISION WAS REACHED, AND THE GATHERED THROG OF DESERT WARRIORS LISTENED INTENTLY AS THE NEW LAW WAS SPOKEN.



AND IT WAS THIS CUSTOM THAT KRUGER NOW ENCOURAGED RASHID TO MAKE FULL USE OF TO GAIN CONTROL OF THE TRIBE. NEXT DAY, A SPEAR FLYING INTO THE SAND OUTSIDE MAHMOUD'S TENT SIGNALLED THE CHALLENGE . . . ONE WHICH MAHMOUD COULD NOT REFUSE WITHOUT LOSING THE RESPECT OF THE TRIBE.



SOON AFTER THE CHALLENGE HAD BEEN MADE, THE TWO SCOUTS WITH MAJOR CAMPION ARRIVED AFTER THEIR LONG JOURNEY. ONE OF THE ARABS WENT TO INFORM MAHMOUD—



HOWEVER, WHEN RASHID NOTICED CAMPION'S PRESENCE HE SAW IT AS A THREAT AND QUICKLY INFORMED KRUGER.



MEANWHILE MAHMOUD WAS MAKING CAMPION A VERY WELCOME GUEST.



JUST THEN RASHID BURST IN AND CONFRONTED HIS BROTHER, POINTING AN ACCUSING FINGER AT THE MAJOR WHO WAS MOMENTARILY TAKEN ABACK.

THIS DOG IS BRITISH, AND OUR ENEMY. HE MUST BE KILLED AT ONCE!

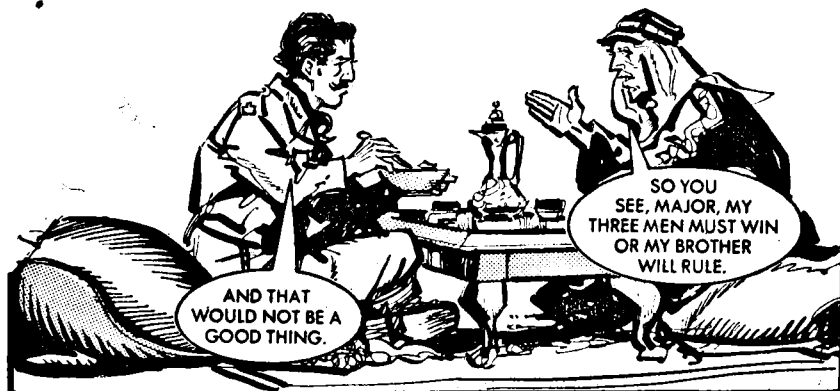
SILENCE! WHILE THE MAJOR IS HERE HE WILL NOT BE HARMED. HE IS A FRIEND.

RASHID SNEERED AND REMINDED HIS BROTHER OF THE CHALLENGE ... AND WHAT MIGHT COME OF IT—

HA! SOON YOU WILL NO LONGER LEAD OUR PEOPLE. THEN I WILL HAVE MY WAY ...

NASTY PIECE OF WORK, THIS.

ONCE RASHID HAD LEFT, MAHMOUD INVITED THE MAJOR TO EAT WITH HIM WHILE HE EXPLAINED ABOUT KRUGER'S PRESENCE AND HIS BROTHER'S EVIL INTENTIONS AND THE COMING CONTEST.



AS THEY FINISHED THEIR MEAL KARL KRUGER ENTERED, BOWING POLITELY TO BOTH MEN, THEN INTRODUCED HIMSELF TO MAJOR CAMPION.



BOTH THEIR COUNTRIES WERE AT WAR, BUT HERE THE TWO MEN WERE ON NEUTRAL GROUND AND COULD DO NOTHING TO OFFEND THEIR HOSTS ... AT LEAST WHILE MAHMOUD WAS IN POWER. AND BOTH WERE WARY AND SUSPICIOUS—



MAHMOUD LOOKED ON WITH DISLIKE. HE HAD NO LOVE OF THE GERMANS AND HAD GRUDGINGLY GIVEN IN TO HIS BROTHER'S PLEAS BY LETTING KRUGER STAY.

THAT AFTERNOON THE WHOLE TRIBE EAGERLY AWAITED THE NEXT DAY'S CONTEST.



ONE OF MAHMOUD'S MEN, A FINE-LOOKING ATHLETE, SAT AT HIS MEAL BEFORE BEGINNING TO PRACTISE FOR HIS EVENTS.

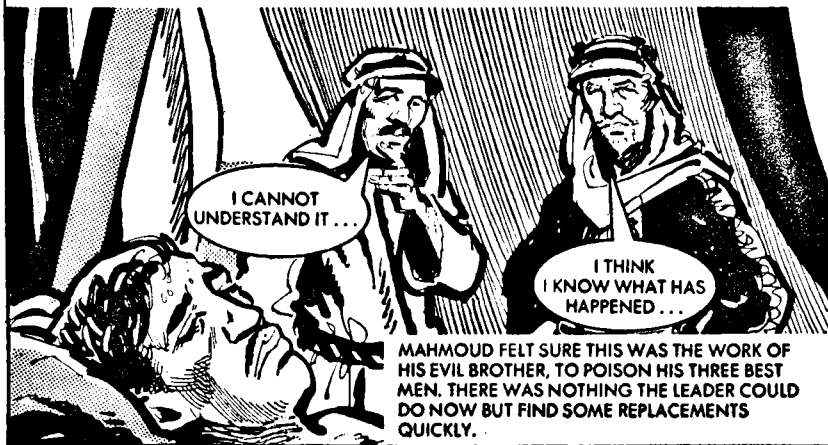
SUDDENLY HE SQUIRMED IN PAIN AND STOOD UP, CLUTCHING HIS ACHING STOMACH.

UUUH...  
THE PAIN...



WITHIN AN HOUR HE WAS IN THE GRIP OF A TERRIBLE FEVER AND CONFINED TO HIS TENT.

THE SAME DAY MAHMOUD'S TWO OTHER MEN SUDDENLY TOOK ILL, AND WHEN THE PHYSICIAN WAS SUMMONED HE DID NOT RECOGNISE THE SYMPTOMS.



I CANNOT  
UNDERSTAND IT ...

I THINK  
I KNOW WHAT HAS  
HAPPENED ...

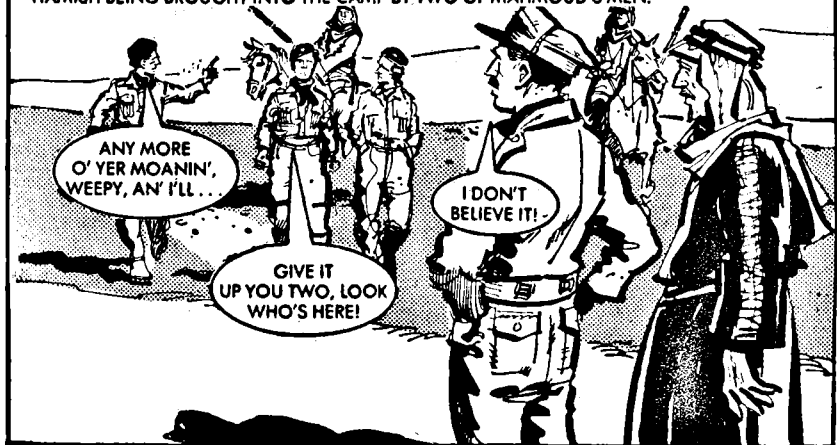
MAHMOUD FELT SURE THIS WAS THE WORK OF HIS EVIL BROTHER, TO POISON HIS THREE BEST MEN. THERE WAS NOTHING THE LEADER COULD DO NOW BUT FIND SOME REPLACEMENTS QUICKLY.

AND MAHMOUD'S SUSPICIONS WERE WELL-FOUNDED, FOR RASHID HAD INDEED POISONED HIS THREE CONTESTANTS. NOW THE POWER-CRAZED BROTHER SAW NO OBSTACLES IN HIS WAY.



DESPITE THE FACT THAT HIS TASK WAS NOW MADE EASIER, KRUGER WOULD HAVE RATHER SEEN RASHID GAIN POWER FAIRLY AND HONOURABLY, FOR HE WAS A MAN GIVEN TO JUST METHODS.

BUT AT THAT MOMENT THERE WAS A COMMOTION OUTSIDE. QUICKLY GOING WITH MAHMOUD, CAMPION WAS BOTH STARTLED AND DELIGHTED TO SEE GABBY, WEEPY AND HAMISH BEING BROUGHT INTO THE CAMP BY TWO OF MAHMOUD'S MEN.



AFTER CAMPION HAD EXPLAINED TO MAHMOUD THAT THESE WERE HIS LOYAL CREWMEN, THEY WERE GIVEN SOMETHING TO EAT. THEN GABBY TOLD HOW THEY HAD COME TO FIND THE MAJOR.



THE MAJOR WAS PROUD OF WHAT THEY HAD DONE AND HE TOLD THEM SO. THEN, SUDDENLY LOOKING GRIM, HE INFORMED HIS MEN OF THE STICKY SITUATION IN THE ARAB CAMP.

CAMPION WANTED TO HELP MAHMOUD, AND NOW THE ARRIVAL OF THE THREE HAD GIVEN HIM THE CHANCE TO DO SO, AS HE EXPLAINED—

LISTEN, LADS,  
I DON'T WANT TO  
SEE RASHID GAIN CONTROL.  
IT WOULD ONLY BE BAD FOR US.  
I'VE AN IDEA, AND IT  
MIGHT JUST WORK...





CAMPION EXPLAINED THAT HE WANTED GABBY, WEEPY, AND HAMISH TO TAKE THE PLACE OF MAHMOUD'S CONTESTANTS.



ONLY WEEPY WAS NOT KEEN ON THE MAJOR'S PLAN, BUT HIS OBJECTION WAS VERY QUICKLY OVERRULED.



WITHOUT A MOMENT TO LOSE, CAMPION ANNOUNCED HIS SUGGESTION. THE OLD MAN WAS ONLY TOO GRATEFUL FOR THE MAJOR'S HELP.



WHEN THEY WENT TO INFORM RASHID HE WAS FURIOUS, BUT HAD NO CHOICE OTHER THAN TO ACCEPT.



THE GERMAN WAS PUZZLED AND ALSO WORRIED BY THE ARRIVAL OF MORE BRITISH SOLDIERS. HE DECIDED TO TAKE A BACK SEAT FOR THE TIME BEING, AND AWAIT THE RESULT OF THE NEXT DAY'S CONTEST.

EARLY NEXT MORNING, THE SCENE WAS SET FOR THE CONTEST TO BEGIN, AND RASHID PROUDLY SHOWED HIS THREE PICKED MEN.



THE FIRST ROUND OF THE CONTEST WAS HORSEMANSHIP. MAHMOUD'S MAN WOULD HAVE TO PICK ONE HORSE FROM THE NUMBER ROUNDED UP IN THE CRUDELY-MADE CORRAL AND BREAK IT IN AS HE HAD NO HORSE OF HIS OWN.



GABBY WAS THE OBVIOUS CHOICE FOR THIS TEST, AS HE HAD ALWAYS BOASTED OF HIS HORSEMANSHIP. NOW MAHMOUD WISHED HIM GOOD LUCK BEFORE HE CHOSE HIS MOUNT.



THE AUSTRALIAN MADE HIS CHOICE AND THE OTHER HORSES WERE LET OUT.

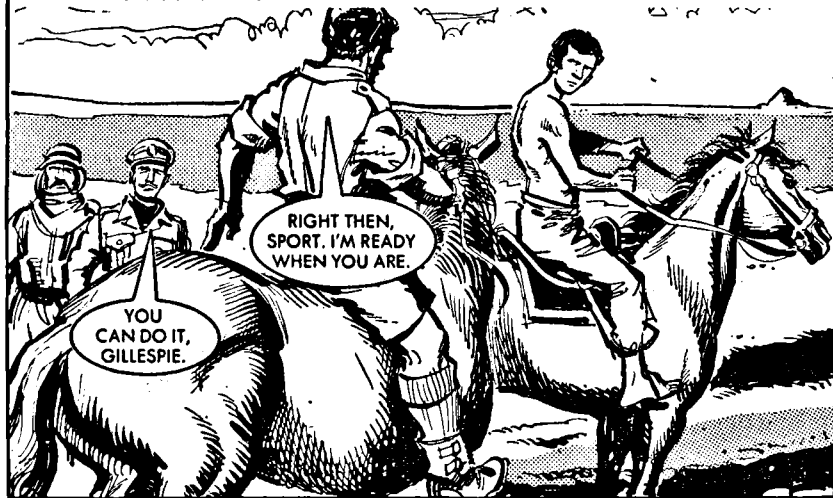
ONCE ON THE HORSE'S BACK, GABBY HELD ON GRIMLY AS THE ANIMAL BUCKED AND REARED, TRYING TO THROW HIM OFF.



EVERYONE WATCHED WITH BATED BREATH UNTIL, EXHAUSTED, GABBY FINALLY HAD THE ANIMAL UNDER CONTROL.



NOW THAT GABBY HAD HIS MOUNT HE COULD MATCH HIS ABILITY AGAINST RASHID'S HORSEMAN. FIRST THEY HAD TO RACE TO A DISTANT ROCK, GO ROUND IT, THEN RETURN TO THE START AND FINISH LINE.



THEN THEY WERE OFF, THE LITTLE ARAB QUICKLY OPENING UP A LEAD AS GABBY URGED HIS MOUNT TO GREATER SPEED.



GABBY'S HORSE RESPONDED AND BY HALF WAY THEY WERE LEVEL, THOUGH THE AUSSIE HAD THE ADVANTAGE BY TAKING AN INSIDE LINE ROUND THE ROCK WHICH MARKED THE OUTER LIMIT OF THE COURSE.



HE NEEDN'T HAVE WORRIED—FOR IN A THRILLING FINISH, HIS HORSE FOUND A LITTLE EXTRA PACE, JUST ENOUGH TO BRING THEM HOME FIRST.



SO MAHMOUD HAD WON THE FIRST PART OF THE CONTEST, BUT RASHID WAS NOT UNDULY WORRIED. HE WAS STILL CONFIDENT OF VICTORY, UNLIKE KRUGER, WHO SUSPECTED THE BRITISH WERE UP TO SOMETHING.

LET THEM  
CELEBRATE THEIR WIN,  
FOR IT WILL BE  
THEIR ONLY ONE.

THE GERMAN'S THOUGHTS WERE INTERRUPTED AS THE NEXT TRIAL OF SKILL WAS ANNOUNCED.

I'M SURE  
THE ENGLANDERS CAME  
HERE TO HELP  
MAHMOUD ...

THIS TIME GABBY FACED THE LITTLE ARAB IN A KIND OF MEDIAEVAL JOUST. BOTH WERE MOUNTED AND ARMED WITH LONG POLES TIED WITH SACKING AT ONE END.

CRUIKEY,  
WHO THOUGHT UP  
THESE CONTESTS? MUSTA  
BIN OFF THEIR  
FLAMIN' ROCKER.

GABBY STARTED HIS CHARGE, GALLOPING HARD AT HIS OPPONENT.

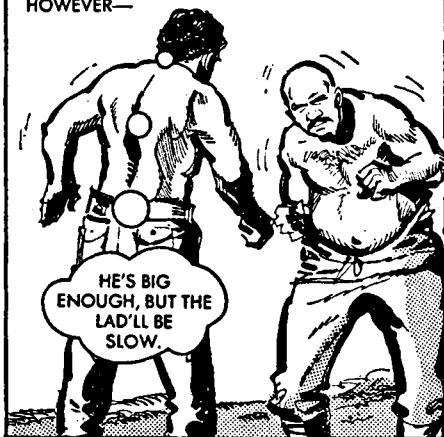
THEN WHEN THEY WERE ALMOST LEVEL, HE LUNGED OUT, STRIKING THE ARAB HARD IN THE CHEST, KNOCKING HIM FROM HIS HORSE.



RASHID WATCHED, HIS EYES FULL OF ANGER. NO LONGER WAS HE SO CONFIDENT.



NOW IT WAS HAMISH'S TURN TO PROVE HIS STRENGTH AGAINST A VERY LARGE OPPONENT. THE BIG SCOTSMAN HAD NO FEARS, HOWEVER—

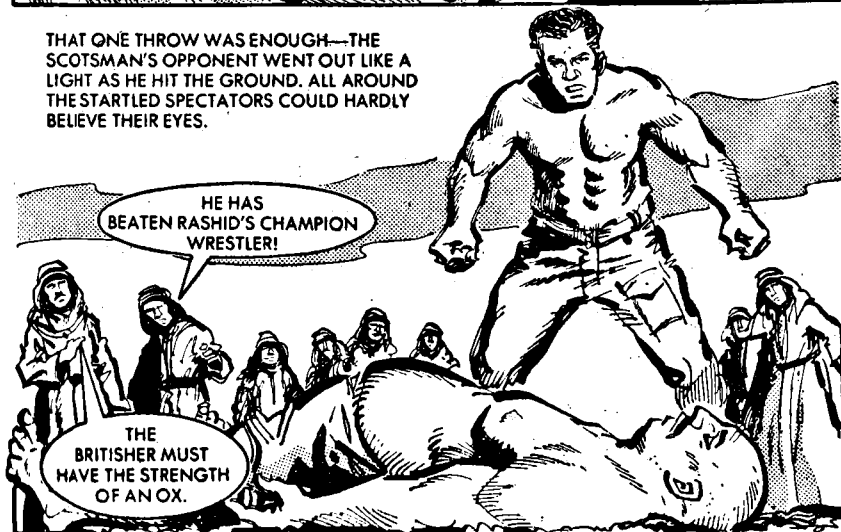




THEY GRAPPLED FOR SEVERAL MINUTES UNTIL HAMISH TOOK HIS OPPORTUNITY AND EXPERTLY THREW THE OVERWEIGHT ARAB.



THAT ONE THROW WAS ENOUGH—THE SCOTSMAN'S OPPONENT WENT OUT LIKE A LIGHT AS HE HIT THE GROUND. ALL AROUND THE STARTLED SPECTATORS COULD HARDLY BELIEVE THEIR EYES.



THE NEXT EVENT WAS A TUG-OF-WAR WITH A DIFFERENCE—THE DIFFERENCE BEING THAT BETWEEN THE OPPONENTS WAS AN AREA OF DEADLY QUICKSAND, READY TO SWALLOW ONE OF THEM INTO ITS DEPTHS.



WATCHING GRIMLY WERE CAMPION AND MAHMOUD. BOTH KNEW THIS WOULD BE A TEST OF SHEER STRENGTH... AND THE ARAB SEEMED TO HAVE THE ADVANTAGE.



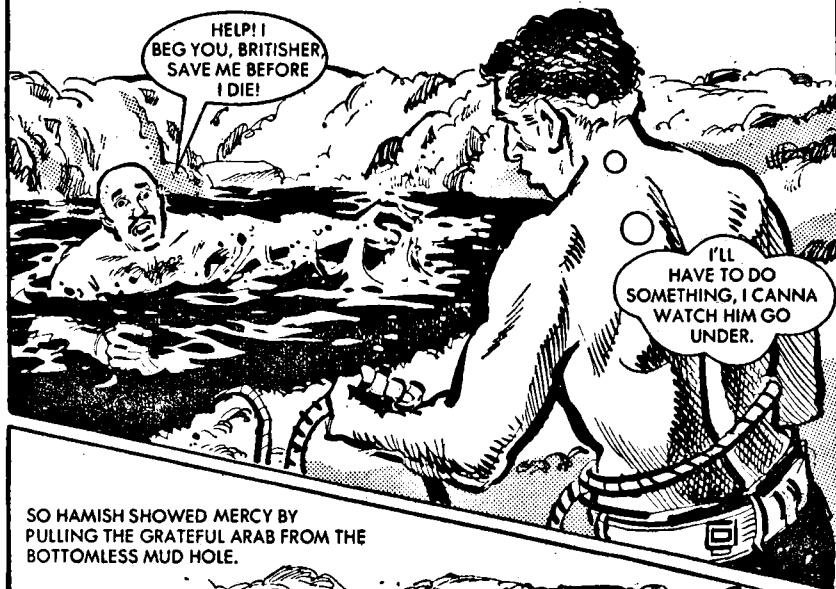
THE SIGNAL WAS GIVEN AND THE ROPE STRETCHED TAUT AS BOTH MEN STRAINED.



BUT GRADUALLY HAMISH GAINED THE UPPER HAND AND THE ARAB WAS SLOWLY PULLED TOWARDS THE QUICKSAND, HIS FEET GETTING LITTLE PURCHASE ON THE STONY GROUND.



SURE ENOUGH, RASHID'S MAN WAS SLOWLY DRAGGED INTO THE QUICKSAND WHICH BEGAN TO SUCK HIM UNDER AS HE STRUGGLED DESPERATELY.



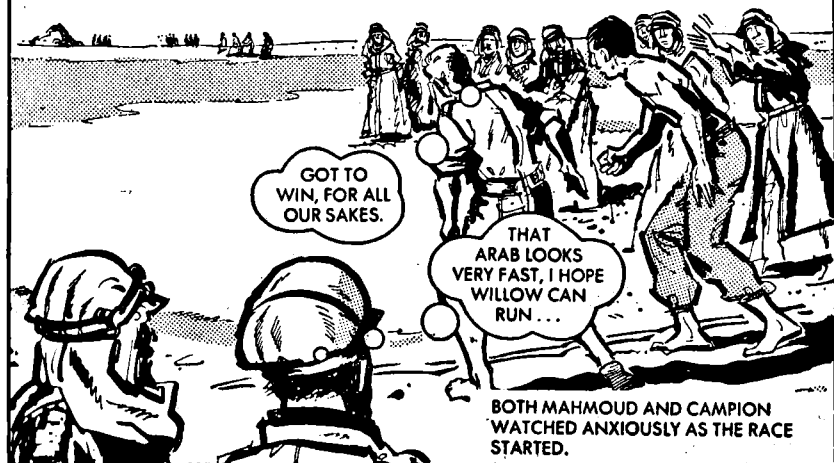
SO HAMISH SHOWED MERCY BY PULLING THE GRATEFUL ARAB FROM THE BOTTOMLESS MUD HOLE.



RASHID QUICKLY GOT HOLD OF THE BEATEN MAN AND GAVE VENT TO HIS FURY.



NOW IT WAS UP TO WEEPY. IF HE DID NOT LOSE THEN MAHMOUD WOULD RETAIN LEADERSHIP. THE PRIVATE'S FIRST "EVENT" WAS A RACE ACROSS THE SAND.



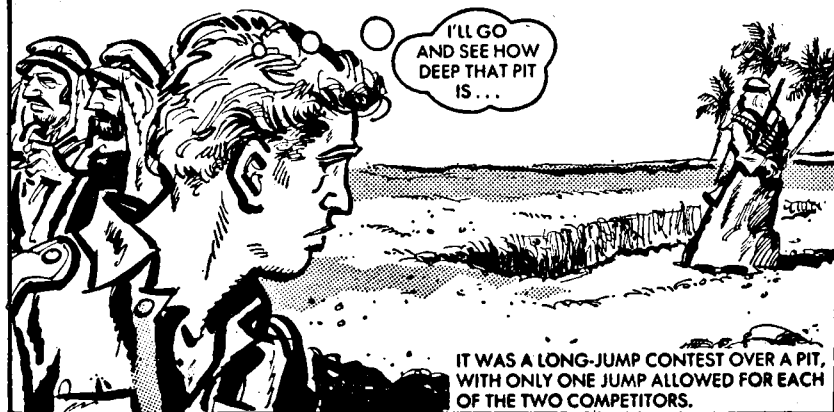
AND WEEPY DID RUN ... AS HE HAD NEVER RUN BEFORE, FOR THEIR LIVES DEPENDED ON IT.



BUT WHEN IT LOOKED LIKE WEEPY HAD THE RACE SEWN UP, HIS OPPONENT PUT IN A MOMENTOUS CHARGE AT THE FINISH TO MAKE IT A DEAD HEAT.



SO TO THE LAST ROUND OF THE CONTEST, AND WEEPY HAD TO WIN TO ENSURE OUTRIGHT VICTORY FOR MAHMOUD.



IT WAS A LONG-JUMP CONTEST OVER A PIT, WITH ONLY ONE JUMP ALLOWED FOR EACH OF THE TWO COMPETITORS.

BUT WHEN WEEPY REACHED THE PIT AND LOOKED DOWN HE RECOILED IN HORROR. IMPLANTED AT THE BOTTOM WERE DEADLY-SHARP STAKES, WHICH WOULD SEAL THE FATE OF AN UNFORTUNATE LOSER.

IT'S TOO LATE TO BACK OUT NOW, I'VE GOT TO GO THROUGH WITH IT...



WEEPY CHOSE TO GO FIRST, AND SWALLOWING HIS FEAR HE BEGAN HIS RUN-UP FOR THE LIFE-OR-DEATH JUMP.

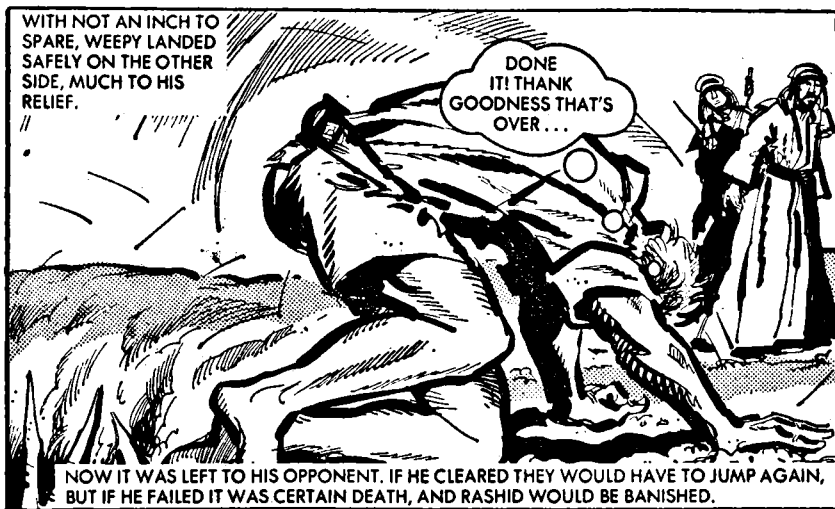
HERE GOES ... THIS HAS TO BE A PERFECT JUMP...



HIS TAKE-OFF FOOT LANDED SQUARELY ON THE PIT EDGE, PROPELLING HIM THROUGH THE AIR AND OVER THE DEADLY STAKES.

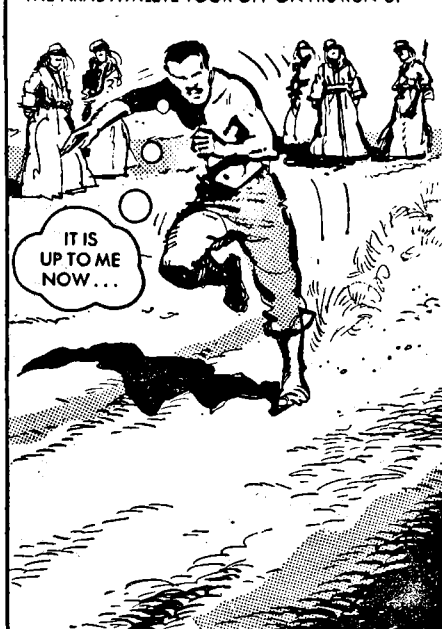


WITH NOT AN INCH TO SPARE, WEEPY LANDED SAFELY ON THE OTHER SIDE, MUCH TO HIS RELIEF.





THE ARAB ATHLETE TOOK OFF ON HIS RUN-UP—



BUT SOMETHING WENT WRONG. THE ATHLETE'S NERVES GOT THE BETTER OF HIM AND HIS LEGS SUDDENLY WENT NUMB.



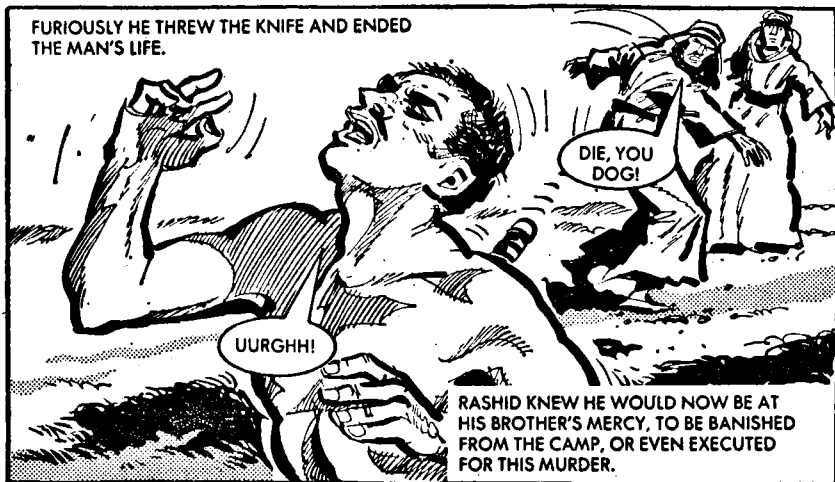
HE SLID TO A HALT AND STOOD WAVERING ON THE EDGE, STARING DOWN IN TERROR AT THE RAZOR-SHARP POINTS REACHING UP.



RASHID WASN'T JUST DISPLEASED, HE WAS IN A MURDEROUS FIT OF RAGE. HE QUICKLY DREW HIS KNIFE INTENT ON VENGEANCE.



FURIOUSLY HE THREW THE KNIFE AND ENDED THE MAN'S LIFE.



BUT MAHMOUD DECIDED TO LET HIS BROTHER LIVE AND ORDERED HE AND HIS FOLLOWERS TO LEAVE IMMEDIATELY, NEVER TO RETURN.



SO WHEN RASHID AND HIS SMALL BAND OF DEDICATED FOLLOWERS RODE OFF, KRUGER WENT WITH THEM. WATCHING THEM GO, MAHMOUD TURNED TO CAMPION—



MAHMOUD AND THE MAJOR RETURNED TO THEIR TENT, AND THEY FOUND THE STRONGMAN HAMISH HAD BEATEN SITTING GRAVE-FACED ON THE FLOOR, WAITING FOR THEM.



THEY LISTENED INTENTLY AS THE ARAB WENT ON—



GASHA PASS WAS A STEEP, ROCKY GORGE, OFFERING PLENTY COVER FOR WOULD-BE AMBUSHERS, AND CAMPION AND HIS MEN WOULD HAVE TO TRAVEL THROUGH THAT WAY.

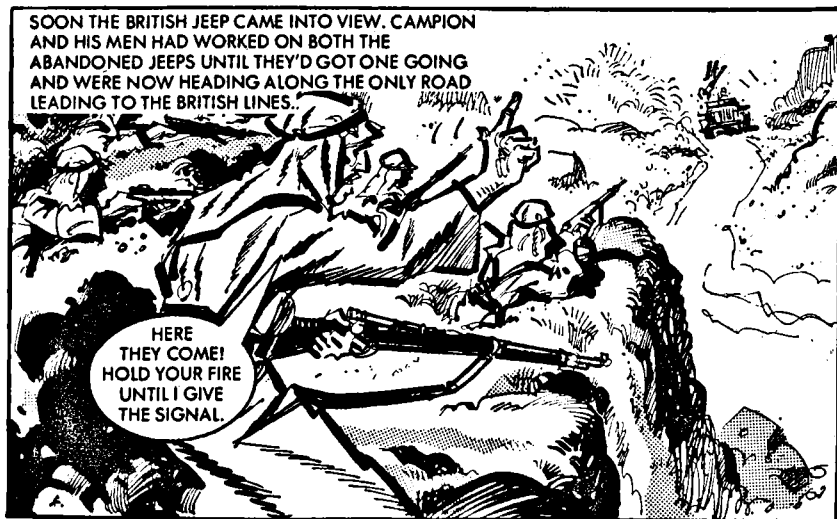
THE MAJOR THOUGHT FOR A MOMENT, BEFORE MAKING A DECISION. AS HE LEFT HE TURNED TO THANK THE ARAB.



MEANWHILE IN GASHA PASS, THE BAND OF ARABS WERE IN POSITION FOR THE AMBUSH. RASHID TURNED TO SPEAK TO KRUGER—



SOON THE BRITISH JEEP CAME INTO VIEW. CAMPION AND HIS MEN HAD WORKED ON BOTH THE ABANDONED JEEPS UNTIL THEY'D GOT ONE GOING AND WERE NOW HEADING ALONG THE ONLY ROAD LEADING TO THE BRITISH LINES.



BUT THAT SIGNAL NEVER CAME. HIGH IN THE ROCKS BEHIND THEM, MAHMOUD'S MEN OPENED FIRE. CAMPION HAD PLANNED THIS BACK AT THE CAMP, AND NOW IT WAS WORKING PERFECTLY.



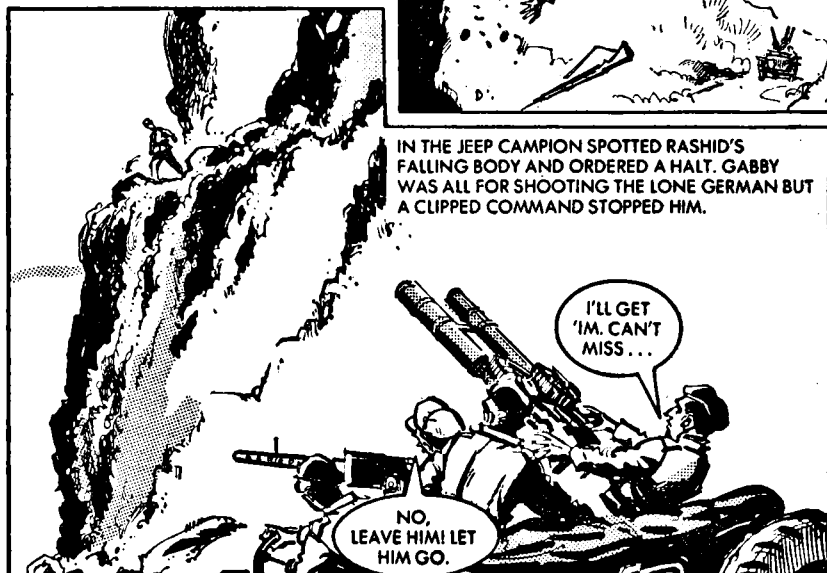
ONLY RASHID AND KRUGER HAD ESCAPED THE HAIL OF FIRE. THE EVIL ARAB WAS NOT FINISHED, HOWEVER, AND HE TOOK AIM AT THE JEEP BELOW.



... AND TAKING A MIGHTY SWING, HE KICKED RASHID OFF THE LEDGE TO HIS DEATH BELOW ON THE JAGGED ROCKS.

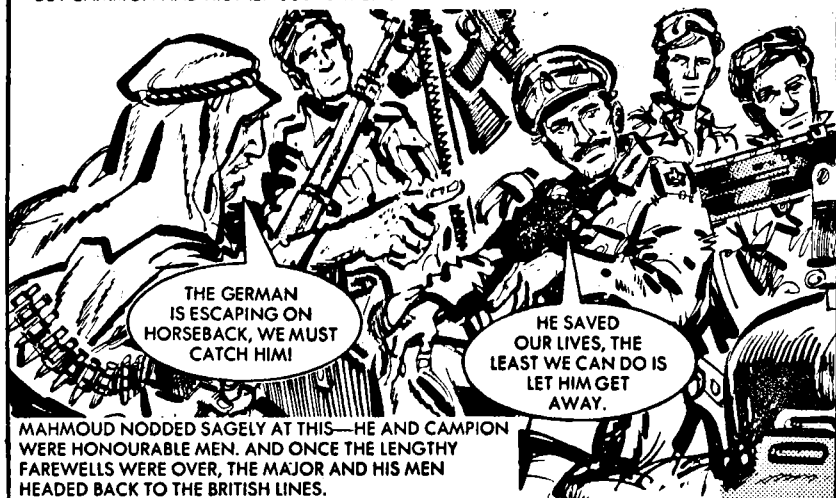


IN THE JEEP CAMPION SPOTTED RASHID'S FALLING BODY AND ORDERED A HALT. GABBY WAS ALL FOR SHOOTING THE LONE GERMAN BUT A CLIPPED COMMAND STOPPED HIM.



THE MAJOR KNEW THAT KRUGER HAD SAVED THEIR LIVES BY KILLING RASHID, SO HE WOULD LET THE GERMAN ESCAPE WITH HIS OWN LIFE IN RETURN.

ONE OF MAHMOUD'S MEN WAS QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT KRUGER WAS GETTING AWAY, BUT CAMPION AND HIS MEN JUST SAT BACK AND WATCHED.



WHEN THEY EVENTUALLY ARRIVED, CAMPION WENT OFF TO SEE THE COMMANDING OFFICER AND EXPLAIN ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED. BUT AS SOON AS THE MAJOR'S BACK WAS TURNED, A YOUNG, JUMPED-UP OFFICER CAME OVER WITH A SCOWL ON HIS FACE.





CAMPION APPROACHED THE YOUNG SECOND-LIEUTENANT AND PROCEEDED TO GIVE HIM THE SHARP END OF HIS TONGUE, MUCH TO THE AMUSEMENT OF GABBY, HAMISH AND WEEPY.



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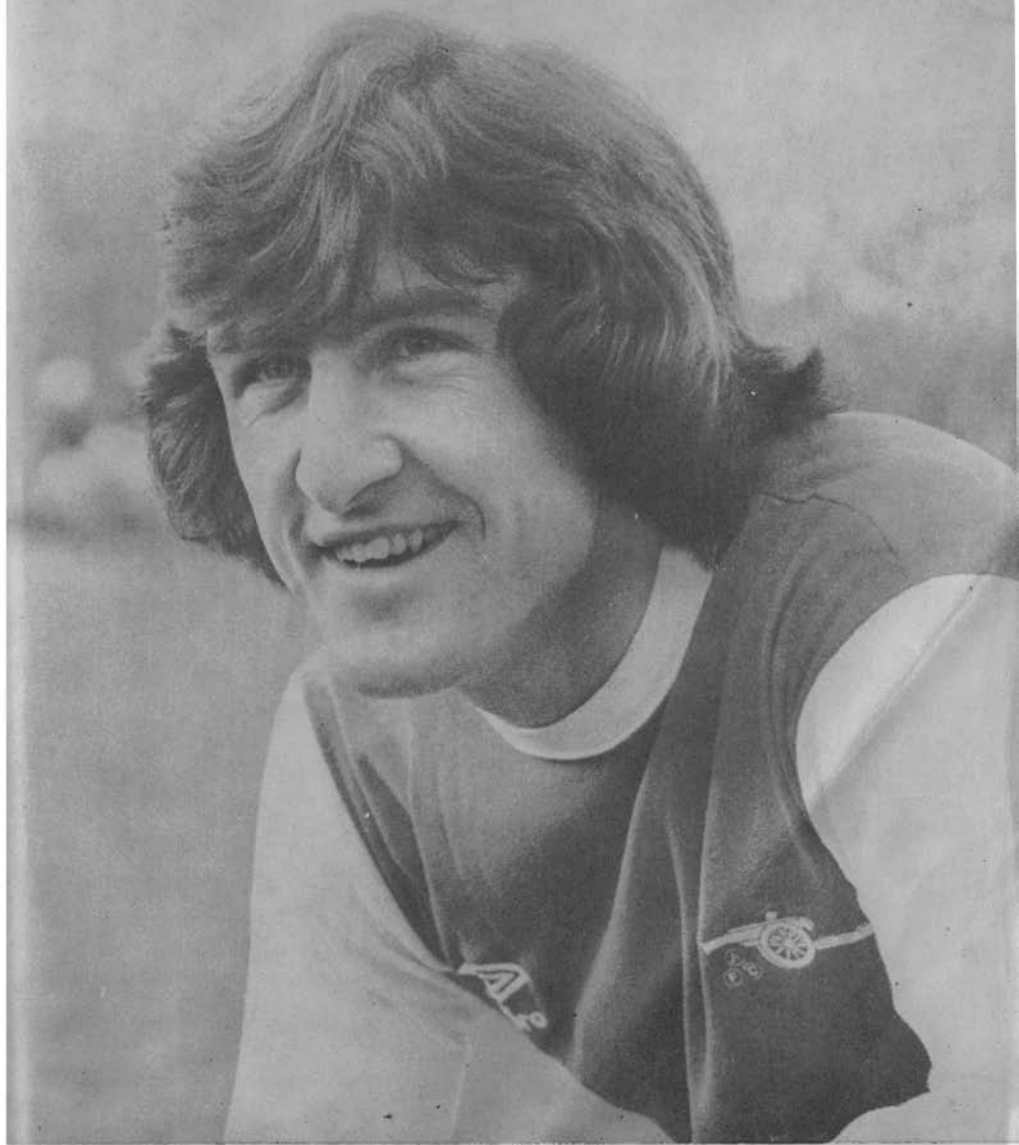


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# The CHAMPIONS

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